

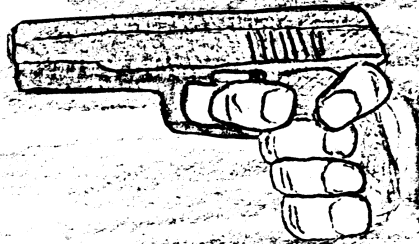
A SKEFFINGTON & SMITH MAGAZIN

THE
IO
GRECKLES
Shadow

MAILING OF APA-TECH #10

... THE SHADOW KNOWS!
HEE HEE HEE HEE HEE...

THE WEED OF CRIME
BEARS BITTER FRUIT.
CRIME DOES NOT PAY!



DEADLINE
OF DOOM

80 Page Novel Featuring
The Shadow's Ventriloquist
Dummy:

CRANSTON P. SNERD

The Shadow-apa of General Technics in Chicago

 Norman House (collator) Dick Smith * 1116 Hull Terrace * Evanston, IL 60202

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No one owes pages, money (except Bill Higgins who hasn't paid for ditto yet), or anything else to this entity because it is only a postmailing.

Spacefilling Babble from the Collator

If the real mailing of ApaTech hadn't been more than unacceptably late, I would be awfully embarased about when this ~~postmailing~~ Shadow appeared. As it stands, I'm out right on time, by comparison. That's not to deny the fact that you must, as soon as you read this, without even stopping to vomit, immediately write you next zine for ApaTech to get it to the real OE on time... but that's just how it goes, gang.

I wanted the cover on stiff paper... it's the back cover instead because the copier wouldn't feed such thick stuff.

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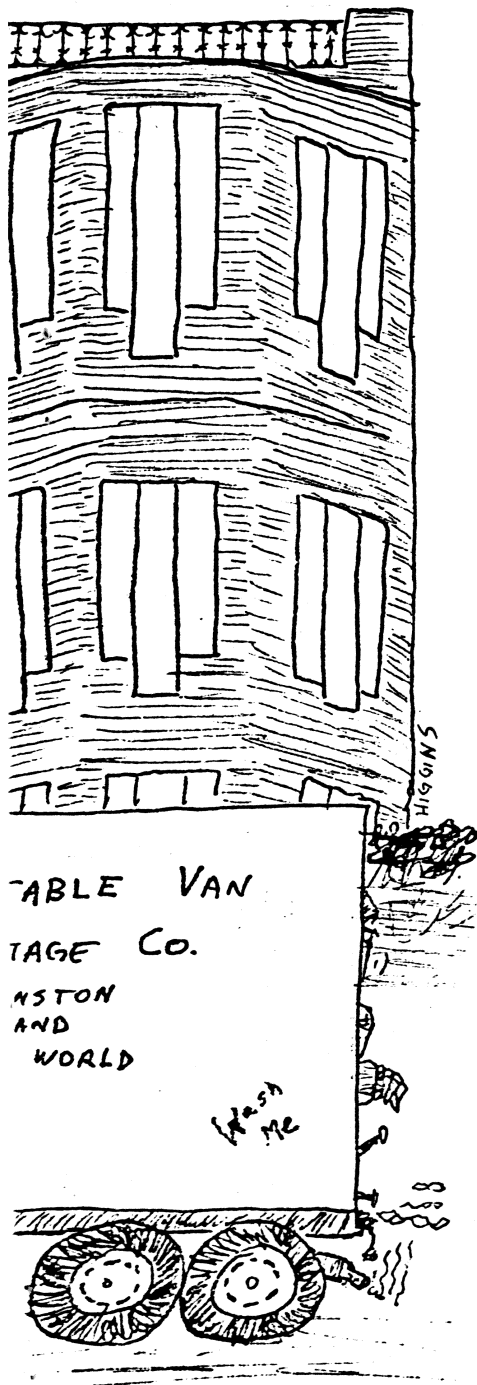


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DON'T LOOK NOW... IT'S

SMITH'S CORONA

produced in January 1981 for the "chicago postmailing" of Apa-Tech #10 by
Richard H. E. Smith II / 1116 Hull Terrace / Evanston, IL 60202

Presumably, by now, almost everyone in this apa has heard that I moved. Thanks are owed to ~~Valli~~ Mike, Alice, Jaff, Doug, Gretchen, Michelle, & Mike for help with this difficult ordeal. Valli & I hoped to get the moving done in time to have at least one day at ChambanaCon, but it just wasn't possible. There are still things in boxes, and they probably won't be unpacked or put away totally for a few more weeks.

WindyCon: Much of the apa was there. While the con went well, I was disappointed with the slow elevators; it seems like the hotel will collapse under the traffic of a worldcon. Also disappointing was the lack of convenient, cheap food. The hotel restaurants were more than a little expensive. The hotel, otherwise, was fine. There is certainly enough function space for a worldcon.

Conclave: I enjoyed this con alot, probably because it was small. I knew most of the people there who weren't 'obvious news' and was able to talk with the people I wanted to without spending an hour finding them first.

BUSINESS SECTION Everyone here waited rather impatiently for Apaftech #10 to finally come out at IsherCon. I suspect that if most of the people contributing to the apa via this postmailing had known when the apa was actually put together, they would have had no problem in contributing. Not that things don't get busy at Christmas time, but....

If it helps anyone, I offered 1¢ per sheet ditto service in WindyApa and will make the same offer here. I need a week or so to get a chance to run material, and will, if you wish, then mail/UPS it with mine. Contact me for more info. (I do nice ditto, too. The Higgins contrib in this ish was ditto'ed by me.)

Mailing comments follow immediately....

APA-TECH #9 (october '80):

555 Times (GTD): What's wrong with BASIC? Are you becoming a teenage computer wizard, too? Isn't this a little late for that? // Obviously, I support my own proposal. As far as I can tell, so does everyone else. I can't understand why they haven't bothered to tell you. // Spaceships ish... I don't know what (if anything) I'll do with it yet.

Spacecon (Ossie): Interesting. Hope you continue to contribute! // Do you know of anyone hacking the private longdistance carriers (like Sprint or MCI)? Seems like alot of potential there. // I imagine we'll see Bell selling time on CCIS (probably in the form of packet network ports) fairly soon.

Transporter Topics (Rod): I'm sure several mention Benson, Arizona as the GT theme song. I don't know why techies start singing it everywhere, but they do. The words really aren't very techish either, but.... // After driving "mush cars" for several years, I found that it took a while to get used to driving on cars with clutches even tho I had learned to drive in one. Now, tho, I can do it without thinking again. And I continue to like manual transmissions better; you have much more control of the car, especially in bad driving conditions.

Lost in the Dark (Donna): If you are sure you want to go to Kazoo (and from talking to you I find it so), you may indeed want to stall a year before going to college there. I do, however, think you should plan on going for the moment. Among other excuses, most of us didn't learn enough in highschool to keep us employed at something either interesting enough or profitable enough to live with. Not that you need college to provide you with a "stimulating" environment, or interesting companions... I think fandom can do that. // If you don't like the ditto quality you get at school, you might try me. By the way, the lg is for paper, so if you provide your own, there's no charge.

Horrid (Jon Singer): Micronet doesn't offer service during prime time, which is one of the reasons it's so cheap. It is the offtime CPU time from a pre-home-computer commercial timeshare house. I use them, and rather like them. // I've yelled at Bill Higgins for encouraging readers to skip the beginning of Gravity's Rainbow twice, now, and he still isn't convinced. I think the scene between Katje (as Queen of the Night) and the Colonel puts him off. // Yes, 16K runs are reasonable now. It's nice that there are a few parts (I'm thinking of the Z80, for example) that they aren't almost impossible to use with. I keep meaning to build...

Tookie Bird (Doug): I'm not quite sure (this is the only comment I'll make regards your NorEasCon report.) that Silverberg did that good a job presenting the awards. I, for one, will knock off several points for nastyness to Lou Tabakow. // Your comments to Jamie about belief & psychic abilities are, at least, calm and reasonable. Still, the only thing that comes to mind is one author's definition of the difference between 'cult' and other 'religions'; a 'cult' is a church that you join as an adult... a religion is what you're born into. How is this relevant to what you wrote? Damned if I know. // funny, the basketballers at Wisconsin were thieves, too. Wonder why it runs with the sport...? // I agreed with you Ham analogy for computerized apae before, I think. Just look at CB radio. I've never heard anyone there talk about hardware (I mean RADIO hardware!) beyond asking for a "radio check". // Feminism vs. etymology: I'll hold back one round, and answer this one after the female members (Benee, at least, won't be able to resist this one) have commented.

Real Time (Steve): I still think that Space Mountain is the best roller coaster that I've been on. Not that it's the highest or fastest, but it runs in the dark, and the surprise at the end makes it. // I have to deal with business people all the time. They are interested in understanding what the computer/whatever does, but don't have the technical jargon. In my area, they usually have no trouble understanding the idea that the computer does everything step by step, and that the steps are specified in little tiny increments. What they usually have trouble with is the capacity of the various

Smith's CORONA
ApoTECH Shadow Mailing #10

3

((Steve...)) storage devices. And of course, the speed with which code can be written and the speed at which it will finally run are impossible for them to guess at. // Tarot cards don't work that well for me, so I only have to conquer traditional mental superstition. // Knowing Anne & Bob Passovoy doesn't help Number of the Beast one bit. Sorry Bob (H.).

Telephone (Bill R.): Ditto isn't unreadable. Altho we discovered that your typer didn't have enough pressure to type masters. Other than that, mostly RaeBnc.

Nertz (Keith): "Carcinoma Angels", yes. // So you're converting to Scientology?
// Sorry, mostly RaeBnc.

Incorrent (Marty): Several thoughts on consulting seem appropriate, but this is all that comes out at the moment: A know several bright, young, energetic programmers who attempted to consult on their own and discovered quickly that they couldn't make it. I suspect you've chosen the right route. Unfortunately, much of the consulting work that needs to be done today is rather boring business stuff. // The last time I worked on systems which had names, it was two tired but happy IBM 7094's which had been surplussed. We were running mostly Martha while using George for parts, altho Martha's core had been dropped so we used the one from George. At my office at B&H, the five systems are just A,B,C,D & E. // DEC's PDP-11 FORTHAN has generated threaded code for years. So does RSTS/E BASIC-plus, in effect. I can't get excited about FORTH, tho, mostly because it's unreadable. A classmate of mine at UofW (he's with Intel now) did a little structured language that compiled into a FORTH-like code. The compiler took about 2Kbytes of 8080 as I remember... just very simple.

Squalor (Bill H.): The usual way to have programs like Rolf's SCRABBLE player develop good word lists is to have them collect the words that are played against them. They can file them along with the user that input them, so that people who make up ridiculous words can be embarrassed to make them stop. Then you just get lots of players... // Modern computers don't blink. Indeed, if the trend continues, the juggernaut should probably talk. ((Which reminds me, I finally got a small quantity price on the Votrax single chip voice synthesizer. Is anybody interested in one for under \$200? If we can just find ten people....))

Marshmallow (Greg): On arriving in Chicago: the Continental bus is easiest. Of course, it's too late now. // RaeBnc, I'm afraid.

Various Gonzo's (Valli): Goodtime Lobster, huh?

Corona (Me): Oh yes, the tirade ish. // Interesting to note that someone is selling a processor with wired in tiny-basic. A source code level interpreter, no less. Fortunately, they're honest about it. It's sold as a machine control machine for very small, slow jobs. And the unit will run off ROM'ed code, too. // Lazers: my spies in Mpls. are working on class three lasers for MiniCon. They will probably have to be key-locked.

~~~~~ filler:

Valli & I are the suckers incharge of the con suite at CapriCon. You now have an excuse to attend it. I can't promise that it will be worth the effort, tho. Then again, Valli & I will need lots of help...?

The twonky survived the move ok. I managed to find time to test it, recently, and it ran ok. Now back to work building that damn floppy disk controller.

Meanwhile, I'm working (at work, silly) on a microfilm camera interface that simulates an IBM 3287 printer. I have to learn enough IBM to write test software.

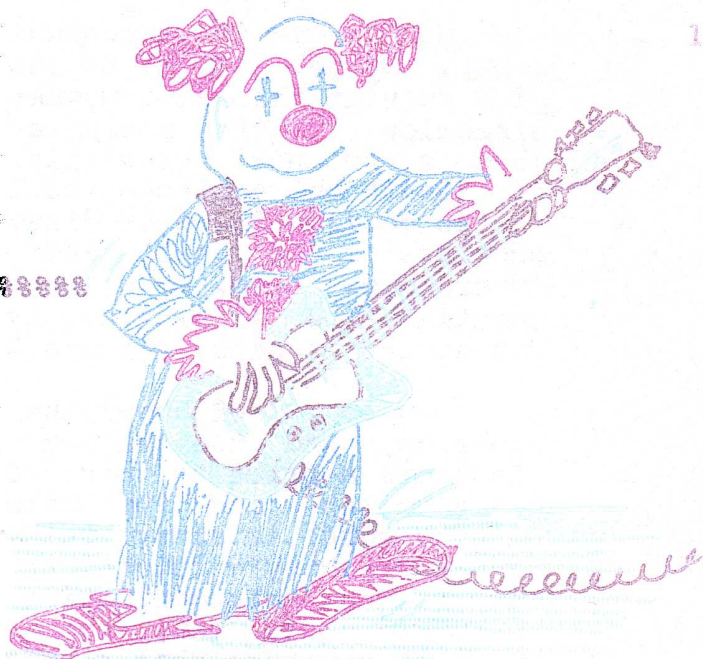
*Yuk! That's just fishy!*

YOU

ARE THE CLOWN OF CREATION

~~~~~

More ramblings from the dazed mind of W. Skeffington Higgins, which has been described as "a veritable cesspool of knowlege." Produced as Spinthairiscope Media publication number Eight for the Shadow Mailing of Apa-Tech 10. Our Hero may be found at 853 Lorlyn Drive, Apartment 1A, in the humble hamlet of West Chicago, Illinois, 60185. New business address--yes, it's a long story--is Mail Station 344, Fermilab, Box 500, Batavia, Illinois 60185.



~~~~~

### Right of Eminent Domains, Or My Induction into the Magnet Facility

Well, kids, things have shaken up considerably since our last episode. On Monday, 1 December, Tom Kirk, head of Fermilab's Neutrino Department, asked me to meet with him in his office. There he gave me a letter from the Director, Leon Lederman. Leon's letter explained that I had been selected to work in the Magnet Test Facility on superconducting magnets for the Tevatron. I was to report there the following Monday.

The Tevatron is the trillion-electron-volt accelerator Fermilab will install in the present Main Ring tunnel. As it will again be the most energetic machine in the world, and will give us a substantial edge over existing machines at other labs, it has the highest priority of any project here. So when the Tevatron needs more people, other departments have to relinquish them.

In this case there are about a thousand new magnets needed for the Tevatron ring. For several years our on-site Magnet Factory has worked to develop suitable superconducting magnets and facilities to mass-produce them. At last they are ready to go into high-volume production, operating around the clock, seven days a week. But there is a need for trained people in large numbers to support this production. Along with eight other Engineering Physicists I was drafted-- sorry, inducted-- to help with quality control and magnet measurement.



Not to get too technical (I may do that in a Pyro article soon), my job will be to shove various types of probes up the beam pipe running through a magnet in order to measure the strength and direction of the field at different places through the magnet. This is necessary not simply to decide whether the magnet is "good" or "bad," but to learn its individual peculiarities. Inaccuracies in the desired field or direction can be compensated for when the accelerator is built and tuned, but they must first be well understood. Also, bugs we find in the quality of field may sometimes be eliminated by changes in the production process. Subsequent magnets may then be free of such errors.

How do I feel about the transfer? Well, I was quite happy in Neutrino, and the Magnet Test Facility is not as nice nor as glamorous a place to work. On the other hand, I still want to work at Fermilab, and the chance to learn a lot about a new field (no pun intended) is always welcome. In addition, the job is vital to the Laboratory's future, and it gives me a foot in the door of the Tevatron and superconducting technology. Nobody has ever attempted to build this many superconducting magnets before. There are probably not more than a hundred or so in the world outside of Fermilab. And many other outfits, both commercial and scientific, are watching to see how well we can do the job.

I also have a written promise that I can return to my old group in two years. At that time it might not be too difficult to get work in some other department, too, where my talents might be useful. It's a little far away now, but the possibilities look good. Check with me after the Chicago Worldcon...

#### Quote of the Year

"Carl Sagan may have evolved from the apes, but I certainly didn't!" --Mrs. Mary Ellen Higgins.

#### Who Could Ever Play Tic-Tac-Toe on a Board As Small As #?

I hadn't taken any college courses in two years, and Fermilab is willing to pay for tuition and books, and there were lots of things I still wanted to know about computers, and I've never been sure my formal education should end with an M.S. in physics--well, I enrolled in a class in Data Structures at the Circle campus of U of I. For fancy stuff like research in computer science, there is nothing in DuPage County or anywhere closer than 40 miles from home.

The course is a prerequisite for several more advanced and interesting courses in computer science, and covers some of the basic building blocks of software. I took it to test the water and find out whether I'd enjoy going back to school, and possibly to prepare for those fancier courses.

To make a long story short, I learned a little bit about data structures and a lot (the hard way) about programming in Lisp. Lisp is a bizarre language very useful in artificial intelligence work, but not many other places. Of course I was glad to learn it, but its relevance to Data Structures was never really established (if it has any, more relevance than any other language, I mean) and the programming assignments were massive and deadly. The second one involved a program which, given a list of facts and rules for deducing new facts from them, would deduce all possible new facts. This cost me thirty hours in one November week. When Newell and Simon did it around 1960 in a similar language, it was acclaimed as a breakthrough in AI. And it took a year and a half of work. I never did get the damn thing to run properly before the deadline.

The final assignment consumed about twice as much time. Write a version of Adventure (sort of a motorized Dungeons & Dragons) in Lisp. Acting on an idea of Renee's, I set my dungeon in a science fiction convention hotel. I got it done, with a few bells and whistles, after much sweat. I guess I was trying to prove that the surkeys teaching the course were not going to force ME to give up. Sheer stubbornness drove me to finish the program.

But it was an unpleasant experience. I received indications that the TA for the course held his students in very low regard, and that this sort of pointless assignment of backbreaking problems is standard in the Information Engineering department at Circle. Now I am very uncertain about taking any more courses there. I certainly want to list my Adventure game, and maybe get it on a floppy for future reference, because I've done a lot of work already and it can be developed into a worthwhile game. But I can't seem to log onto the system anymore--

#### Oh, No, It's That Time of Year Again!

I just got the Hugo nominations ballot in the mail. Followers of this space will recall that I love this activity for several reasons. Unlike the final ballot, your choices are totally unconstrained, and not what somebody else thought was good. You can cast votes for up to five of your favorites in each category. And in the less popular categories such as Fan Artist and Best Fanzine, your individual vote swings lots more weight.

I'll probably talk about Hugo nominations in detail in the next mailing. But I want to put in a plug for my favorite cause:

NOMINATE PyroTechnics!!!

Nominees for the Best Fanzine award can get on the final ballot with a very small number of votes-- about thirty or forty. And Pyro is, and has been, such a good zine that I feel it deserves this recognition. We have no hope that it can WIN a Hugo, understand, but just getting it on the ballot would mean that the techies have left a real mark in the record books.

The barrier seems to be that most of you who are Worldcon members don't bother to send in your nominating ballots. You know who you are! The rest of us can't handle this alone. Besides, your nominations in all areas have a pretty good chance of affecting the final ballot, since there are about a tenth as many nominators as final voters. Even the most dyed-in-the-corflu fanzine fan can still nominate four other zines, and have a fair chance of seeing one of them pop up on the final ballot. Someday, we may even push Geis off it!

Please fill out that ballot. And send it in today.


(Since the issue of Pyro I helped edit is being published in January of 1981, my motives are pure. I'm pretty sure only Jeff and Cap'n Al have edited the zine in 1980.)

She Was Only a Superconductor's Daughter, But She Had Absolutely No Resistance

I promised to say something about our brunch with Jannet Jeppson and Isaac Asimov in Boston. Bill Leininger and I had decided to join the "Take an Author to Lunch" movement during the upcoming Worldcon, and we talked over the candidates last spring. When we realized Asimov would be there, there were no competitors. I volunteered to write the letter inviting him and his wife to dinner.

We knew that thorny problems can arise in this business. How many people do you know who'd just love to join you for lunch with Dr. A? On the other hand, suppose you took all 300 of them with you. How many could contribute to, or even hear, the conversation? In order not to cheat some of the fans involved, one has to keep the number small. But this means you have to keep it a secret, or face the wrath of the multitudes you didn't invite. And your only, feeble excuse is a snotty: "Well, you were perfectly free to invite him to lunch yourself, and you didn't!" As Bill reflected, "Nothing's worse than a lynch mob made up of your best friends---"

We agreed upon eight fans and two guests, and each of us would invite three of the fans. Of course I thought immediately of Illinois's greatest Asimovophile (?), my old buddy Barry Dean Gehm. Actually, I procrastinated about writing the letter to Asimov, so when I told Barry about the whole affair, he offered to write the letter. Did a good job, too. There ensued a



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A FULL 10<sup>26</sup> KILOGRAMS!  
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A POUND!

BUY NOW  
AND I'LL THROW  
IN A COUPLE  
MOONS!

brief flurry of letters and postcards establishing that Asimov and Janet would love to come, but since they would be in such demand at the con, we should make the arrangements there.

To make a long story short, our party met the Asimovs on Sunday morning, 31 August, in one of the Sheraton's restaurants. Attending, besides Bill and myself, were Nikki Ballard, Angel Insley, Greg Ruffa, Barry, and Carol & Jeff Duntemann.

Most fans are aware that Isaac Asimov is boisterous and extroverted, putting on a jolly facade of egotism and lecherousness. Upon arriving he insisted on kissing all the women present. Then he sat down and began telling a stream of stories interrupted by a stream of stories from Barry and myself. Anybody else who wanted to speak had to use a crowbar to get a word in edgewise. Fortunately, everyone did.

Dr. J.O. Jeppson could hardly contrast more with her husband. She seemed reserved and very shy. A practicing psychiatrist, she has published a number of short stories and two novels, The Second Experiment and The Last Immortal. We discovered a quiet wit all her own once we convinced her that we really wanted to meet her, too. She and Isaac had just finished editing an anthology of SF humor, Laughing Space, and invited us to contribute to the sequel.

I was a little surprised that Jeff was so quiet throughout the meal. He explained later that he gets nervous and awestruck in the presence of The Great Ones. I expected him to be his usual loquacious self.

The true, secret purpose of the meeting was to tell a joke, original with me, I had been saving for years, waiting to be introduced to Asimov. I knew he shared my love of terrible puns (as well as other forms of humor); I knew he'd enjoy the Vincent Van Gogh Joke. He did. (Many of you have heard it already, so I won't repeat it here. Ask me sometime.)

Actually, he tried to guess the punchline, scribbling it on a napkin, and came up with the same wrong answer that Jeff had when I told him the joke many years ago.

We had a fine time, and I think Isaac and Janet enjoyed our company, too. They had to leave after an hour-- off to another panel or autograph session-- and we were all so absorbed that we forgot to remind Jeff to take a photo of the occasion. After goodbyes (and another round of kisses) we lingered for more coffee. Barry mused. "Boy!" he said, "we just ate lunch with Isaac Asimov!" I looked up at him.



## You Are the Clown of Creation

"They're gonna kill us."

There was an enormous grin on his face.

### Mr. Magnet's Mailing Comments

GTB-- "I refuse to program in Basic anymore!" How painful can it be to write a Basic mailing-labels routine? I see that Robert Osband has become Richard in your listings. I thought you had to be at least a Monsignor to change somebody's baptismal name.

Ozzie-- Your fascinating zine gives rise to a multitude of questions. What does your job of Communications Analyst involve? Can you give, or direct me to, a good explanation of packet switching? What baud rate will CCIS support, and isn't there a low limit on the number of users at any given time? What physical communications channels are employed by Telenet and Tymenet? Do they just rent cable/microwave facilities from the phone company, or what?

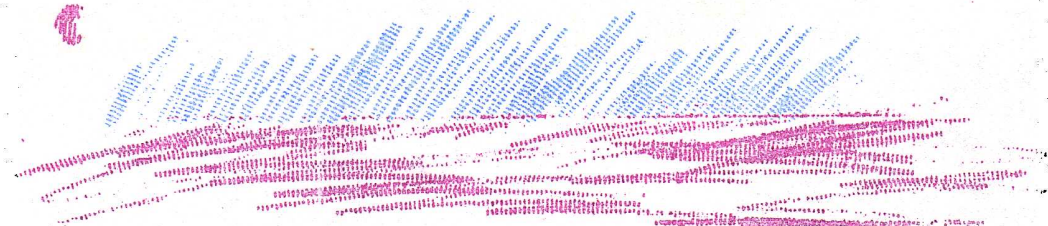
You could answer some pretty basic questions for those of us without much knowledge of the phone business. I know that our telephones transmit frequencies of up to 4000 Hz, but what is the bandwidth capacity of the phone lines themselves? How does AT&T feel about small-time data transmitters such as microcomputer owners and small businesses? Bentley reported that rumor in the last mailing about Bell tracking down data users of phone lines, but he did not explain its significance. It IS legal to use modems and such, isn't it? Could he have meant that Bell was simply trying to identify possible customers for dedicated data equipment?

Finally, are the MICK letters on your coffee mug actually in magnetic ink?

Rod-- Bill Colsher wrote "CMOS Wizard" as sort of a GT recruiting song, but he's never been very fond of it. As for a theme song, you could never get all or even most of the members to agree upon a single tune. The closest thing to a theme we have, I guess, might be "Benson, Arizona."

By the way, Dark Star was shown at Fermilab recently, and it drew a pretty good response from the crowd. Since it is a black comedy which appeals to a relatively narrow range of tastes, I was a bit surprised it was so popular. Seeing it in this context was a new experience, since most of the audience were also involved in a shoestring-budgeted, high-technology effort which can occasionally produce psychological stresses.

I am glad to see somebody stick up for the back-to-the-land folks in this apa. They can often shed considerable light on the more conventional existence of the rest of us. And they are often accomplishing neat stuff which is fun to hear about.



Donna-- Re premailings & postmailings: In the limit, these delays and mixups can provide for a more or less steady stream of magazines in the mailbox. I'm all for it.

One-sided ditto sounds pretty appealing after some of my previous disasters in repro. Not yet sure whether I'll do this one single-sided. I'm still not willing to spend the price of Xeroxing on my apazines.

Jon-- Glad to hear from you, and glad to hear you know of my existence. You are, after all, a somewhat legendary figure in fandom, and nearly everyone I know seems to know you. Maybe someday one of our mutual buddies will introduce us.

If you don't want to join the apa, please consider franking your thoughts once in a while.

Do you know of a network that has Lisp? My understanding of "Fnord" comes from the Illuminatus books, but I would not be surprised to learn that the idea was stolen from somewhere else. Can you or anybody else document another origin?

Yes, of course there are some great scenes in the first part of Gravity's Rainbow. But I have seen too many people founder on the rocks of the dull or disgusting passages in that section. You must admit that after Slothrop reaches the Casino Hermann Goering the action really picks up and does not slow down again for a long, long time. I think that a weak-hearted or weak-stomached reader might find the book much easier to get through if he started in the middle, and then could return to the early part at any convenient time.

Jeff Duntemann wrote all of his stories at Clarion '73 with Chicago as the Galactic Capital. It became mythical among the GT community, even those of us who weren't Chicago Chauvinists.

Leininger speaks of a particular Erlenmeyer flask which he bought at American Science Center here. Todd Johnson was trying to etch it with hydrofluoric acid, but the acid left no mark even after he tried a stronger concentration. I assume the flask was Pyrex, but it didn't have any marking to tell us for sure. We know the HF was good, because we used it to etch several pieces of window glass.

HookyApa?

Doug-- I guess Leo Doroscenko's questions were the low point of the Noreascon trivia contest. Leo is damn good at answering trivia questions, but the ones he makes up leave a lot to be desired. They are far too picky. Good trivia questions should deal with facts that people can reasonably be expected to remember. Most of Leo's would not get a very high rating in the ChUSPA Trivia Rating System.

You are willing to pause in planetary exploration until space factories and powersats are built? I think you are talking about a factor of 100 or more in cost between the two efforts. For this and other reasons, suspending astronomical probes would NOT guarantee resources for more practical projects would be committed. I'm for learning all we can about the planets and such, as soon as possible.

"The fact that [psychic] experiences are not consistent does not mean that they don't exist. It simply means that there are inhibiting factors that we know nothing of." The first sentence seems quite true. The second is veriest hogwash. It assumes that psychic experiences do exist, which is unproven, and it further articulates an unsubstantiated assumption about their nature. What the fact does mean is that there is a phenomenon here which is very difficult to study by any method. My pet notion is that ESP may not be amenable to study by the scientific method, which has very definite limits. But if any of us want to take a serious look at the problem (I don't), we should abandon the baggage of our preconceptions and start afresh-- with the proviso, of course, that we may return for some of our baggage if any proves to be useful.

Possibly because it was so thick, your last mailing was full of absurd statements. "-- Larry Niven's Magician stories are not dealing with magic. They deal with a scientific use of a natural resource, one that can be mined with words rather than with machines." All would-be critics should learn to tread very carefully when near the line that separates science fiction from fantasy. It tends to vanish when one looks directly at it. Perhaps this line has magical properties of its own? Anyway, the "magic" in this series may seem pretty scientific to you, but to me it seems magical enough; it deals with reviving the dead, charms and spells, ancient gods and demigods, and so forth. The fact that Niven's magic has well-defined rules doesn't bother me unduly. (This is probably the point at which to quote

HIGGINS'S COROLLARY  
TO CLARKE'S THIRD LAW:

Any sufficiently advanced magic is indistinguishable from technology.)

On the other hand, many of your peers regard Niven's SF stories as "hard science" tales, because there is often some amount of real scientific fact involved. There are also invulnerable spacecraft hulls, stasis fields, faster-than-light drives, and neutrino-stopping materials, all of which are given little or no scientific explanation. A good case could be made that these stories actually deal with magic rather than science. If one accepts both this thesis and your own, Niven's science fiction can be shown to be fantasy, while his fantasy must really be science fiction.

All I am saying, I suppose, is that you are dealing with concepts which can easily be redefined. Your feeling, that these Warlock stories aren't really about magic, won't change the minds of all the rest of Niven's readers, most of whom think they know fantasy when they see it.

I am very dissatisfied with the way "Licorice Bazooka" turned out. It was my first attempt at mimeo, and I used Todd's electric typewriter to cut the stencils. The Editor phoned me after running off a few copies and told me, "You should have used an electric typewriter!"

"-- my mother dot dot dot (yeah, this text editor doesn't support ellipses) can find wide-necked shirts in Normal, Illinois dot dot dot" I think Mrs. Van D. would have had better luck if she had shopped in Big And Tall, Illinois dot dot dot.

Steve-- Wish I had more to say about communication with non-technical people, as the subject interests me greatly.

My NT friends tell me they are getting quite a lot out of Cosmos.

Misha-- Looks like the Rayleigh Effect (Why is the sky blue?) is popping up in Jupiter's atmosphere.

I hate the "fuzzy" look of dot-matrix printers, and I wouldn't want to own one. This is unfortunate, because daisy-wheel devices are about a factor of four more expensive. Won't bother me, though, until I actually buy some computer equipment. Whenever. Your present typer produces crisp, clear copy.

"Living in the flatlands is hazardous to your health." Well, living in the mountains increases substantially your exposure to cosmic rays, and thus your risk of cancer. No figures available at the moment.

Huzzah! for returning for yer PhD. Sometimes I wish I had the guts to do it. Good luck to you.

The point about allergic reactions to alien environments is an interesting one.

Mike B.-- Liked your thud-and-blunder opening. Is ice cream manufacture ANOTHER one of your mysterious talents? There will be plenty of rare Japanese animation at Capricon in Evanston in February. See Pyro for more details.

Since you are likely to get a lot of enthusiastic support for Clarion, let me put in a few words for the opposition: Do you really need it? Can you already write salable stories? Are you \$1000 worth of sure that Clarion will improve your talent? Personally I am neutral about the workshop, but I feel that the

Clarion grads among us tend to put a lot of pressure on the rest of us to attend. I know Jeff Duntemann, George Ewing, Allen Brennert, and others sold a lot after they attended Clarion, but I know even more who seem to have had no success since then. Just consider it carefully.

I didn't make up a list of ten magazines, but here are a few titles: CoEvolution Quarterly, New Scientist, PyroTechnics, Scientific American, and EDN (best freebie zine I've encountered). Possibly Locus, Time, Fantastic Films (provided Stein & Co. clean up their act; the last couple of issues have been terrible), Byte, Popular Electronics, File 770, Science News, and Industrial Research & Development (especially good news section).

What do I subscribe to now? Pyro, Scientific American, File 770, CQ, EDN, IR&D, Electronic Products, and with my American Physical Society membership, Physics Today and Physical Review Abstracts. At the library I scan New Scientist, Science News, Journal of Irreproducible Results, and a few others regularly. I buy FF and Byte sporadically. These habits are dictated by vagaries of budget and availability.

It's kind of fun to see your comments on the current mailing. It helps leave the boards clear for your next issue, and of course we can all comment on your comments in the following mailing, thus speeding up the dialogue by a factor of two.

Bill R.-- Excuse me, but letters to ASF often make me yawn. You certainly did a lot of typing there, though. I agree with your comment to Donna-- I don't like to see really personal stuff aired in public.

The meaning of your question about the Big Bang is not quite clear; however, if you are implying that the Cosmic Egg was one of a pair of virtual particles which managed to escape from a black hole, it seems that the hole should be many orders of magnitude bigger than the Egg itself. Any other situation would be even more unlikely than the event you describe. So the hypothetical black hole would not be universe-sized, but giga- or tera-universe-sized.

I agree with you that Darth Vader as portrayed in TESB is not credible. Killing everyone in sight, for no good reason, makes him a bogeyman rather than a villain. How could he get anybody to work for him knowing that his captains and admirals are allowed no mistakes?

As I have said, I have little interest in ESP, but one unusual power I had not heard of turned up in Keith's last mailing: "Recently I have begun 'flashing' on Jumbles, that is doing them only in my head."



F O W L  
R E A S O N S !



Keith-- In physics one comes across examples of "the glibs" fairly often. How about, "Well, that's just a consequence of the interaction's being represented by  $SU(3)$  [ or  $SU(2) \times U(1)$ , or  $SO(10)$ , or other favorite groups....]." And the ever-popular (I love to use it myself) "--in some sense--."

I for one am not gonna give up my dreams of space flight, even though they may have lost a bit of their luster.

Marty-- Your PET's name was Moira? Why? My sister's name is Moira Ann Higgins Foskett. I liked that Al Stewart album as well as a few others. My favorite of his songs is "Flying Sorcery," from a later album, which deals with the singer's romance with a girl who is an airplane nut. Lots of good trivia in there.

How does the connection between those little routines in a threaded language contrast with functions in Lisp?

Skeffington-- Hmm, you forgot to give the answer to a trivia question you asked in the previous mailing. 'The Number of the Beast' is a title which INCLUDES the quotes. (I am told they have been omitted in the American, abridged edition.) I was thinking of "'If This Goes on-- '" when I gave the hint, but glancing at the Future History table of contents, I see that this is a feature of several Heinlein titles. "'We Also Walk Dogs'" and "'It's Great to Be Back'" are examples.

Greg-- I have not seen anybody mention this, but Pohl gets one of his "gosh-numbers" upside down in Beyond the Blue Event Horizon. He repeatedly refers to "alpha," the fine structure constant, as one hundred thirty-seven. Actually it is  $1/137$ , or to be more precise,  $1/137.03604$ . This constant determines the strength of the electromagnetic interaction, so if Fred's value were correct, we would all be 137 squared, or 18,769 times shorter, and 6.6E12 denser, because the protons and electrons in our atoms would be more tightly bound and closer together.

Heard rumor recently of an interface board which makes Apple video suitable for VTR's. Ask Bentley or Leininger, or start scanning the 300-odd pages of ads in Byte.

Valli-- Interesting to hear that your mother enjoyed herself at Autoclave. I would not be ashamed to bring my parents to a con, but they are almost totally without interest in SF. Sometimes I envy Barry Gehm, the Insleys, and others who have somewhat fannish parents.

What are the EMS and ECS crunches you speak of regarding PLATO?

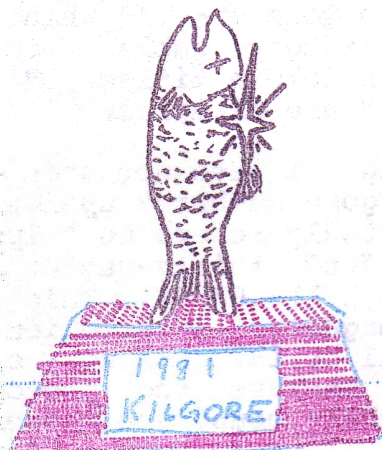
Dick-- Please give a list of 4-cent Xerox places in Chicago. I have been unable to find any out in this end of the suburbs.

You seem to have gotten the idea that the Kilgore Award is for really bad books. Understandable, because I never really got around to explaining it.

Mike Brandl once described a certain novel to me as "the best Good Bad Book of the year." Eventually something clicked, and I realized that an award should exist to honor such works. One frequently runs across books which cannot be said to be good, but are far from hopeless. Perhaps a novel has a good story badly written. Or a lousy story, well written. Or-- this is a classic feature of Good Bad SF-- there are good scientific or technological ideas in the book, but the writing is less than mediocre.

A nominee for the Kilgore should be a book you know you should hate, but liked anyway. Partly neat, and partly awful. As you can see, there are many ways a novel can fall into this category. There are awards for the best books and stories of the year, but none for those which can be classified under Nice Try.

The award is named, of course, for Kilgore Trout, Kurt Vonnegut's mythical hard-luck SF hack. Trout was known to his few fans as man of extraordinary ideas and visions who couldn't write his way out of a wet paper bag. I think the award should be a large chrome fish on a wooden or marble base. However, since the award has never been presented, tradition is flexible. I am willing to consider transparent fishes and even lime jello fishes.



I have discussed this notion with a number of fans, and found that the field of Great Terrible SF and fantasy is fertile indeed. Up to now I have done nothing special to distribute ballots or present the awards, but I still harbor hopes of doing it someday. I encourage members of this apa and other fans to send me their nominations and ideas about the award itself.

I think you can get a proposal on the WSFS business agenda simply by writing it in. The constitution should answer your question.

Who is this Dijkstra, anyway? As far as I know, Todd, Tullio, Dave Levine, and Mark Hyde all have locks on their lasers. I can't think of anyone who doesn't, in fact.

I think techies are, to some extent at least, discreet about sex out of politeness, and I think that's a good thing.

I'm only kidding when I give you a hard time about joining all those apas. I think the little corner of fandom I run around in-- General Technics and the Chicago Fannish Axis-- would benefit from more contact with fanzine fans and their world. Both Renee and myself-- I can't speak for anybody else-- were "brought up" to believe that publishing fanzines is an important part of the mainstream of fandom. I am still astonished at the lack of zineac in the Chicago area, considering the large population of fen here.

So putting together an issue of PyroTechnics (an issue which was pretty close to a genzine, if you look at it) helped a bit to satisfy my feeling that I'm not quite a Trufan unless I'm typing and cartooning and pasting up once in a while. Still, Pyro does not reach much of the usual fanzine-publishing audience, so there is a lot to be done. It would be nice if you began to forge a link between these two subghettoes. Count on me for cartoons anytime.

Ditto is cheaper and easier to use than mimeo, and I can draw on it without taking any training courses. There may be other advantages.

Whew!

Thanks, computer.

Note to self:

Next time, use 64 or 65 lines.

Work closer to the left margin.

Don't indent paragraphs so much.

Figure out the ellipsis trick you pulled on page 11.

And, of course, try to make the deadline.

(I couldn't this time, really I couldn't!)



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Chicago, IL 60631

# White Rabbit

## Syndrome

Well, folks, here it is, three days before Christmas and the house is a mess, I still have four presents left to buy, another four left to finish making, the shopping for Christmas dinner left to do, and what do I get? The flu. Bill leininger and Jerry Corrigan got it too, so I can't feel singled out.

I missed the deadline and if I don't want to get myself kicked out I just had better get myself in gear and postmail.

We finally got the Chicago Pyro finished and sent off to Jeff. It taught us a few things. 1) None of us have plans to do another in the near future. 2) I have no plans to do another until I have a word processor and printer at my disposal any time I/we need it. 3) Nobody is perfect. 4) Tempers get short under deadline. 5) There is more to the theatre than repetition. 6)...

Speaking of the theatre, I was looking through the Information Handbook and noticed the largest area of common interest after computers and electronics is theatre. This is interesting, if not significant.

I suspect that there are a lot of similarities between fandom and the theatre microcosm. For one thing, both groups are touchers. Both keep odd hours and often affect unusual modes of dress.

Gee, if we only had a barn we could put on a show.

Once upon a time I had a whole page of notes and comments on Windycon but they seem to have been misplaced. It is no longer clear enough in my mind to reproduce those comments, so I'll only say a few things. The Masquerade went really well and I had a good time doing it. Thanks again to all of you who helped out and made it go so smoothly. The only real problem I found was the scheduling of Doug's panel on SF movie criticism against the GT panel. Actually, this upset me. I was annoyed. I was really mad. I... Never mind.

FLASH: About  $\frac{1}{2}$  hour ago I partook of my first real food in about two days. It shows no disposition to come back up so far.

(Why do people, when sick, feel compelled to give a timetable and frequency count of throwing up?)

The best thing to fill up space with (so's I can minac and not get kicked out) is mailing comments. Here goes.

Cover: Why is the guy holding an English muffin?

555555 Timestimes: Why did we get two of these??

Bob: Hi!! Sit down, take your shoes off, tell us about yourself. Whilst your 'zine was very informative and interesting, it sounded a bit like a term paper. Welcome.

Rod: Why is it you don't write with a southern accent? To an extent we do have a theme song, a couple of them. On the one hand we have "Benson, Arizona" and on the other we have "The Tech Song," based on "The Jets Song" from West Side Story.

Steve: Is it true that Carol neuters cats in your kitchen? I have heard rumors to that effect.

Roper: Re yr ct Keith on TESB: I heartily agree. It seemed almost as if they were sacrificing character for plot which they really weren't because not a whole lot happened.

Dick: Are you insulting my furniture?

You tirade made me squirm. Not that I feel myself to be guilty of any of the things you chose to tirade about. (Actually, I might and I might not) But just getting yelled at makes me squirm. It all comes down to insecurity, I suppose. It ALL comes down to insecurity, squirming, gutspill, tirades, gloating over not being a Vidkid, building weapons, carrying weapons, tirading about weapons, brandishing weapons, wearing costumes, not wearing costumes, talking about sex, not talking about sex, being a feminist, not being a feminist, being convinced that Jamie Hanrahan hates you, etc. None of us are perfect (except Bill Higgins and Greg Ruffa, perhaps). Most of us are all too aware of that fact. What's my point? I don't know. I was just feeling insecure and felt like tirading. Just remember when any of us starts acting funny it's probably just insecurity and all we need is a pat on the head and/or a hug.

Well, that's my minac. Sorry to those I didn't get to.

[illegible]

The imagery blew me away. I had been, for some time, wondering if my sense of wonder had shriveled up and blown away. I hadn't been able to get that special feeling for some months. Then, with the close-ups of the rings, shots of the planet through the rings, rings within rings within rings within rings, moons that look like huge eyeballs, moons that are covered with smog, a crescent Saturn seen from above (north) casting its shadow through the rings, a motion picture of the ring system revolving around the planet, spokelike apparitions appearing and disappearing--it was all too much!

Titan has been degraded to the second largest satellite in the solar system, just behind Ganymede. It seems Titan's atmosphere is deeper than had been thought. And the atmosphere has a very high percentage of nitrogen, much higher than had been suspected. Finally, Voyager pretty much laid to rest the question of life on Titan. The clouds are optically thick and reflect most of the light that hits the moon back off into space; the surface is so cold that liquid nitrogen seas on the surface are now postulated. All the right chemicals, too cold. Bah!

The ring system seems to be held in place by a complex inter-relationship of gravitational and electromagnetic forces. Under current concepts, particles the size of ring particles would be blown away by solar wind pressure and dispersed by the pressure of Saturn's magnetic field in a relatively short time. It seems that there are two moons that are pivotal in defining the inner and outer edges of the rings, their gravitational fields keeping the system from wandering out of bounds. There are also two moons that seem to be in the same orbit--well, nearly. They are co-terminus, which means sometime in the next year or two they will pass each other. They think. In fact, they may collide. And if they don't collide, at least one of them will end up in a wildly different orbit. This encounter should happen (I think) before Voyager 2 gets to Saturn, so if they collide or one breaks up, we may have a good view of it.

SHUTTLE ON ITS WAY? The Space Transportation System, more commonly known as the Space Shuttle, is actually on its way to its first launch. The orbiter Columbia has been attached to its external tank and solid boosters in the Vehicle Assembly Building at the Cape, and all further work will be in pre-launch stream, not vehicle development stream. All of the thermal protection tiles are on the vehicle, and the remaining gap-fillers will be in place by the end of the year.

Launch crews, mission control teams and the prime and backup crews are currently putting the orbiter through its paces in the VAB running full-scale launch simulations with all orbiter systems powered up. All mission software is complete, both for the five onboard computer systems and for the launch control system computer at the Cape. Rollout to Pad 39A is set for the week between Christmas and New Years, with a test-firing of the Space Shuttle Main Engines (SSME) set for the second week of February. If there are no major problems in the rest of the pre-launch checkout time, we could actually see a launch in the third week of March. More likely is a late-April, early-May first launch. But the slip time expected is, at most, two months.

America will be in space again!

MEANWHILE, IN MOSCOW... The Soviet Union has just flown Soyuz T-3, the third flight (second manned) of it's new Soyuz manned spacecraft. And it had a crew of three.

Since three cosmonauts were killed when a hatch seal ruptured in 1971, the Soyuz has been limited to a crew of two, since the craft could not support three men in pressure suits. The life support system was too limited. Well, Soyuz-T can support three suited crewmembers during critical mission phases. Maybe they gained room and weight allowances for the new life support system by replacing the old metal-drum sequencer with a microprocessor...

Anyway, this just shows the Soviets are closing the gap that existed between their manned space technology and ours. Let's hope Reagan will get committed to supporting manned space in the U.S. again.

DILEMMA OVER M.C.s--Since this is a postmailing, I don't expect to get many MCs in APA-Tech 11. I know for myself that it's difficult to keep postmailings together with the disty, and when you sit down to write MCs the postmailings get forgotten. So should I write my usual MCs, trying to keep ~~arguments~~ discussions going, dropping hooks, generating controversy? Yeah, why not.

WIZARD OF OZ (PRESS): I have heard (Read? Dug up?) that Ma Bell is pulling a fast one on all who use their phone lines for data transmissions.

It seems that Bell (through its various local subsidiaries) is now offering special low-noise-level data-dedicated lines. If you get too many bit errors on these lines, Bell is liable for a whole lot of things, like immediate service, monetary fines, etc. But these lines cost. It's still a lot more economical to use regular phone lines.

The problem is, it is rumored that Bell is inducing a noise level on its regular phone lines guaranteed to produce unacceptable bit errors, just to force people to use their special, pay-through-the-nose data line service.

So, although the network you describe sounds like a good alternative to what we've got now, it is criminally abusive of the phone company to take away the cheapest option.

BEAM ME UP, ROD: Just a note that applies to you and others: when putting anything into quotation marks, all punctuation appears inside those marks. So, in your first paragraph, your references should have appeared "Frankenstein?" and "Sparks,"...

I think your climatic concepts, while emotionally appealing, have a basic flaw. There have been times on the earth when advanced societies have existed at the same time as primitive ones. In these cases, the primitives show as little interest in the sky as the advanced societies had when they were at the same point. One must, I think, have a full belly to start looking past the ends of ones feet (or past the next meal).

Also, the point should be made that Cro-Magnon man was not modern man. There were small but recognizable physical differences between the two that mark Cro-Magnon as distant from Modern Man as Neanderthal. Although it does seem that Cro Magnon man was the last variant before Modern Man appeared, and probably contributed significantly to our gene pool.

HERE--HAVE A CANDLE: Well, Donna, if you think Kazoo is a good idea, go ahead. Keep in mind that a relationship over 200 miles is different from a relationship over 10 feet. You will find that being with Tullio won't be the same special thing after a while. Levels of emotion cannot be sustained over long periods of time at their peaks. Things can get, well, comfortable, and this is mistaken by some as a lack of interest, a lack of love. It's not, it's just the normal progression of a relationship. But if you expect the passion to go on forever and aren't prepared when it cools by proximity, it could hurt. So keep it in mind.

TERRIBLE ROCKIES DISEASE: Whaddya mean? Something wrong with our APA?

By the way, Jon, I sometimes wondered where all those extra fannish Hs come from. Well, I see one of them came from your name (assuming conservation of Hs in the universe).

About the Techies and sex issue, I think "Techies get no sex" is more valid than "Techies have no gender," but neither is absolute. Speaking for myself (Gretchen! Get away from me with that liquid paper!)

Oh, well. Just been constrained on that subject. (Look! Look! I'm bein' oppressed!)

And what's the idea of writing a 'zine composed of nothing but MCs, not joining the APA, and LEAVING MY ZINE OUT!!!!??? This is not only fatal to my need for egoboo, it makes me do things like take cheap shots against people who don't even know how to spell their own first names. (Just kidding, Jon. No, Jon, put that blaster down.

SLICK OPERATOR: You call Columbus civilization? You should come in and see how things are nearer the Galactic Capitol, where the suns still shine bright (at least on Thursdays)....

Re non-tech people and tech talk, you should define what circumstances this takes place in. If you are trying to tell a co-worker what you need and why, then you just have to slog through it--he/she should eventually understand it anyway. If a friend says "What you been up to these days?" it's generally more politic to describe what you're doing in vague generalities. They don't really want a course in CS 405 when they ask that question. While I am up on the catchwords of computerspeak, I still don't have much of a grounding in electronics (and dealing with high currents, that's probably a good thing) and wouldn't understand the delicate nuances of attaining picosecond access times in microcomputers (or whatever). It all boils down to a basic question: what does the person I'm talking to want or need to know? Keep that in mind and it should usually work out.

I get my information on the Soyuz program from the news media and "Aviation Week and Space Technology," a magazine invaluable to me and impossible to subscribe to unless you work for the aerospace industry. Fortunately, they allow library subscriptions. (Hey! Maybe I can start up the Chicago Science Fiction Society Library and get a library subscription! Maybe.)

PAYING THE BILLS: The "microwave hearing" effect is probably a purely physical phenomenon created by sound interacting with microwaves and the modulated microwaves vibrating the bones in the inner ear. I would doubt that any part of the brain is directly interpreting the modulated microwaves. As for the dynamics of sound waves modulating a microwave beam, don't ask me. Ask Higgins or Corrigan.

Re war, I think you're too pessimistic about the ability of the U.S. to fight a conventional war. Admittedly, we are not in shape now to win one, but I think we have the resources to keep from losing until such point (six months to a year after the start) when we are fully armed, trained and mobile. Look what happened in 1941--we lost our entire naval force in the Pacific and yet beat the Japanese with combined naval and air power. The atomic bomb just capped things off; we had the war won at that point. Add to our present position that immutable fact: world polarization would push allies upon us. We would more than likely have full access to all the physical resources of Mainland China from which to get new iron, rare metals, etc., in the case of war with Russia.

And what once seemed like an irreversible social trend is losing speed. The Soviets now know it would be world suicide to invade Poland--the Polish people would rise up and fight, backed (and armed) by NATO and the U.S. With this in mind, it becomes less likely that the Soviets will "pick off countries one by one."

Also, consider that the healthiest economies in the world today are capitalist. Even with the bad economic straits the U.S. is in, we have a lower inflation rate than Russia at the present time, and real unemployment (in a socialist country, there is

no "unemployment," just workers who have been between assignments for three years, but that's a semantic split hair) is much higher there than here.

The Soviets are in a position to dedicate as much of their gross national product as they like to defense or whatever. And in spending so much more of their GNP on defense than we do, they have driven the quality of life lower for their people. And the socialist bureaucracy is, if anything, more inefficient than ours is, so complete economic control isn't more efficient in the distribution of goods, either.

So you see, the most successful forms of government are those which care for their people the best, and, economically speaking, the socialist/communist form is not the most successful. What will turn out to be most successful is yet to be seen.

OSCILLATING FANCHILD: Keith, you're only in your 20's! And the aerospace industry is in a slump right now. Who says it won't come back? With the advent of the shuttle, there may be lots and lots of jobs available in space. (The field, that is.) If you're really serious, check out the Houston area. That's where most of the major contractors have teams at work directly involved with the shuttle and its payloads.

Just remember, you could get into the right field anytime in the next 20 years and still spend more than half of your life in it. It's still one of the best times to be alive, with some of the greatest possibilities of the human race still ahead of us. Don't despair! And don't take off your shoes!

SO WHO HAS CORRECT THOUGHTS?: Can anyone tell me the genesis of the line "Fear And Loathing At/In....?" I've seen it used in several places. Is it an old line, like "It was a dark and stormy night" or something? Whatever.

I know how hard it can be to pull up stakes and start something new. At least you have a new job to go into. Congrats and good luck.

By the way, I liked the Jedi Stooges! It's not your fault that the microphones didn't work right. And I'm sure there are still unplumbed depths to Star Wars humor (most of it bad).

SUNDIAL STY: If your place is only in squalor at ten o'clock, you're lucky.

Bill, I want to tell you to relax. A lot of people don't know any better when they write than to split infinitives and dangle participles. I, myself, never consciously think of my grammar when I'm writing, and sometimes I get myself written into a corner, from which there is no grammatic exit. So I just push on.

As for "I could care less" I have a strong suspicion that this is a sarcastic remark. It is very hard to imagine someone saying that and meaning it sincerely. You should relax, unwind and start looking for the tone of what someone is saying, not drawing lines of grammar in your mind and daring us all to cross them.

Your ditto is a little more readable this time (or did I just get one of the good ones?).

On the Fan Artist Hugo, I feel very strongly that your average cartoonist is doing something very different from your average straight, representational artist. Granted, some are good in both media. But someone with the painting ability of a van Gogh or a Norman Rockwell competing against someone with the cartooning ability of a Charles Schultz or a Mort Walker? You might as well put every creative person in sf under the general category of "artist" (a good writer is a word artist) and leave it at that.

I agree that the line is very fuzzy. But we have lines around writers depending on how long their stories are. And I would never, ever consider giving W. Rotsler a Hugo for those stupid blobs with huge noses. But that's what he's known for (at least to me) and maybe his "straight" art is worth a Hugo. You see how unfair this situation can be?

MEROWHAT?: To hell with the Earth station. Start pushing for a job at the Moon station!

As for Cosmos, it's a pretty show, but it's hard to take Carl Sagan talking down to the audience all the time. The guy comes off like Mister Rogers' Cosmos sometimes, putting on Mr. Sweater, getting into Mr. Spaceship and taking a look at Mr. Universe. And it seems that the controls of his spaceship are psionic, requiring the pilot to wear a stupid look of amazement on his face at all times. (Actually, I can just picture Sagan staring with dumb wonder at this blue screen for hours on end....)

DR. GONZO AND HER PERFORMING TITLES: Glad you had your usual good time at Boston. I feel really bad about the way the audience acted during the One-Shot. It just goes to show that fans can be just as stupid, ill-mannered and moronic as the run-pf-the-mill mundane moron.

CORONAL ABERRATIONS: I knew if I waited long enough, I would see these 'zines get to be 95% MCs.

Lazers--real lasers should only be used by people who know how to use them safely--and, yes, they can be used safely. I have not seen lasers being used dangerously at cons, and know of no harm that has come to anyone because of sf fans using lasers.

This whole fracas is an emotional fear reaction, of the same type (but not as bad) as the type which followed the TMI accident. Someone gets it into his/her head that lasers are dangerous, gets afraid of being blinded, and all those who hold anything from a Johnson bat-laser to a Proni blaster is sneaking in the hallways maliciously planning and plotting the maiming, dismemberment and blinding of the rest of fandom.

Things get blown out of proportion. Some fool starts talking about police protection and peace-bonding and techies (and their ilk) start getting noisy in their defense of weapons. Both sides start getting illogical, crazy. No one wins, everyone loses.

The only answer I can see to this mess is for both sides to calm down and think rationally, not get into personalities and just study facts. Then maybe we can all reason together.



As I mentioned earlier, I tend to ~~lose~~ misplace postmailings, so that's it for the MCs this trip.

LESS AND LESS OF ME: People who haven't seen me in a while may be shocked the next time I appear before them.

You see, ever since I can remember, I've had a little problem with my weight. I always had a little roll around my middle, making me look heavy. When I first quit smoking in 1975, I ballooned out to a ridiculous weight of about 280 pounds. I managed to lose about 40 of that by 1977, but in March of this year I got back up to 275.

This being completely ridiculous, I determined to lose weight. By the time I got my job in July, I was down to about 255. Working was a means of getting exercise, so I dropped down to 245 by the Worldcon.

Then I went on third shift.

You see, on third shift it's difficult to take a meal break, so I don't. And then I get home, eat a little breakfast, stay up until about 2 p.m. (without eating again), go to bed, wake up at 11 p.m. and get to work by midnight. One meal a day and working harder than I used to have left their mark.

Right now I'm back down to 210, not an unreasonable weight for a thick-boned person who is 6'2" tall. But I'm not satisfied. By this summer, I hope to be down to 180 and gorgeous. Well, at least down to 180.

The only major problem this makes for me is that my clothes don't fit very well any more. I just have to get Gretchen to take all my pants in for me.

(I'm starting to run out of things to talk about, and I'm on an odd-numbered page. Drat. Well, let's try something else...)

Recently went to see a film and was treated (?) to one of the newest forms of ripping off the public: commercials before the film.

The commercials for the stores in the nearby shopping center weren't too bad. They were amateurish and done poorly enough to laugh at. But there was a five-minute film that, well, I just have to describe to express my horror.

It starts with a young man (not too handsome) in a rowboat on the ocean. All of a sudden, the sea begins to boil a little ways away from him. Then a car comes out of the water--I'll call it a Wildfire (because I can't remember what it was). This car then starts racing along the wavetops, chasing the man, who rows like hell to get away.

Suddenly, the poor fellow is washed up on a desert island. He picks himself up, looks around and the car appears on the beach. Out of nowhere. (In film terms it's called a jump cut--film of an empty beach was cut directly into film of the same beach, from the same angle, only with the car there, making it look like it just popped into existence.)

What follows is a strange sequence of barely-clad girls,

debonair secret-agent types, young thugs with guns, cops with guns chasing the young thugs, more nearly naked women making suggestive gestures, live animals, all popping in and popping out of nowhere, interspersed with reaction shots of the fellow on the beach.

Finally, one almost-naked women stays at the car, gesturing the man to it. He approaches, she disappears, the car disappears, he disappears.

Then, words start appearing on the screen, too fast to read consciously. About 20 words came up altogether, each for about 1/10th of a second, but the list was something like this (the last word staying on the screen for about 10 seconds):

"SEXY VIOLENT WONDERFUL BRUTAL PROVOCATIVE OUTRAGEOUS BEAUTIFUL ALLURING FAST HARD SEXY FANTASTIC WILDFIRE"

Obviously, there are laws against broadcasting this kind of thing over the air. I was purely horrified by the implications if this kind of brainwashing is allowed in movie theaters.

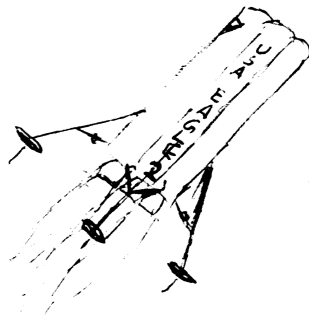
Subtlety I don't mind. Factual presentation I don't mind. But this film was conceived of by the people at the CIA who come up with mind-destroying programs. This was done so slickly, with all the most powerful filmic grammar ever invented, that many people would not even question it, would see it as an amusing film sponsored by the name at the end. And would have this strange yearning for a fast car named Wildfire.

Does anyone know the law in this matter? Can they actually do this and get away with it? Will I be forced to stop going to the movies to keep myself from being brainwashed? Somebody out there, see if there's anything that can be done.

I'm horrified.

That's it for this time. Next issue, we'll look at my proposal for a Shuttle-technology lunar exploration program that should cost less than a billion dollars to make and less than \$10 million for each flight to the lunar surface, each mission capable of a scientific data return in excess of the entire Apollo program.

Until then, Merry Christmas and see you at Isher!



## Dr. Gonzo's Erratic Epicenters

being a secondary and supplementary zine so that I don't have to sit around being bored while everyone writes their zines for the infamous Shadow mailing for Apa-Tech. The words that follow, and those that precedeth, are out of the illustrious mind of Valli Hoski, of 1116 Hull Terrace, #2, Evanston IL 60202 and the telephonic address of (312) 864-3504.

////////////////////////////////////

What's This? A Binary Typewriter?

////////////////////////////////////

\*sigh\* It is a Sunday night gathering of the ever-faithful ~~to indigestion~~ Disreputable Van and Cartage Co., located tonight at the ever-ready Bill's Chili Place (a.k.a. Bill Roper's in Evanston). While pondering this typewriter ball, I keep thinking that I have to come up with better lines! But of course Mr. Roper does own a binary typewriter....why else would it have an 0 for Off and a 1 for On?? Techies are taking over the world!

=====

What Else Is Kazoo Good For But

Buying a Case of Vernors?? @ .38¢/1?

=====

Christmas passed at my house, peacably enough for the first day and a half, then began the battle, albeit subdued, over my time at my friends vr. my time with relatives. Needless to say, after allocating the day and half of Christmas Eve and Day that I was home to familial obligations, I was much more happy at partying and visiting with friends than trotting off to this aunt-and-uncle's or who's. Drove back in freezing rain, then sleet, and finally snow to Chicago after visiting nicely with Larry Tucker and Leah Zeldes in Ann Arbor.

Somehow I didn't quite manage to catch up on my sleep after the Christmas "vacation" at home, so on New Year's Eve, I made a serious mistake. I put myself in a horizontal position on my bed for a few minutes before leaving for Ishercon. The few minutes stretched into more than a few hours, as I was dead to the world. Even the thought of all the nice people waiting at Ishercon wasn't capable of pulling me out of my somnolent state. Dick tried, he really did, I must admit. But folks, I was dead; Ronald Reagan could've been elected President and I would not have cared (although I did care in Nov. but see how far that got me?) (Now for sure, women, minorities, and other good causes other than capitalism and profits are not going to get very far in the next 4 years but that is political and we don't discuss politics here. Include the space program in that category of "other good causes".) So I missed New Year's Eve and the resulting fuss at Ishercon, missed giving and receiving various sundry (and not so sundry) New Year's hugs and kisses. Ah well.

Finally after much sleep and just general lackadaisicalness, after many errands in Chicago, Dick and I actually made it to the House of Isher. Albeit at 4 AM on Friday, but we made it, sort of. Twas very good to see and hug many of you whom I have not seen for a long time due to the long distances that separate us and also those of us who are separated by time and circumstance, if not distance. Somehow, the congestion this year seemed more tolerable than last year's; I even managed to have the computer lab floor to sleep on again, much to my surprise. Video did seem to run a bit rampant this year, perhaps too much so. Steve did a fine job with the movies, at least the Friday night ones which I saw. In spite of the haranguing that video gets by some techies, everyone seemed to be ~~captured~~ ~~alive~~ engrossed in the videotapes on Saturday afternoon. Sadly, I missed the projection television on Saturday night, as I am curious as to how that worked out. Perhaps we shall discover some closet video freaks in Gt yet! Would be nice to add videotape to our repertoire of Gt talents!

## Dr. Gonzo's Erratic Epicenters.....2

Had an interesting adventure on Saturday night while on the way back to Chicago. The weather provided some, shall we say, interesting accompaniment to alleviate the usual 4-lane boredom. That kind of accompaniment I can do without, thank you. A feeling of deja-vu set in as Dick and I were again driving along in blinding snow past St. Joseph's. Now let me sidetrack for a minute to explain this little motel that I know of just west of St. Joe's...while an undergrad at MSU, I would drive the Lansing-Chicago route frequently with a friend who lived in the Chicago suburbs. One trip while taking Business 94 to alleviate the boredom of I-94, we passed a rather scrungy looking motel with a pink neon sign that said "Snowflake Motel--Frank Lloyd Wright". Now exactly what a hexagon shaped motel made of concrete blocks painted white would have to do with Frank Lloyd Wright, I had no idea. But for years it provided a humorous memory for me as I would drive past St. Joe's. (All sorts of postulation went on as to what exactly Frank Lloyd Wright did at the Snowflake Motel, but I leave that to your imaginations....)

Well, bored by the blinding snow, Dick and I decided to get off the 4-laner for a while, and drive along Business 94. Lo and behold, what do we see looming on our left but the Snowflake Motel. I had to go inside and find out what F.L.W. had to do with the place, and it seems that the F.L.W. Foundation had designed this palatial establishment. Well, Dick and I decided to pass the evening here as the rates were cheap and the snow was bad. Surprise, the rooms were actually the most attractive that I have seen in a motel, and touches of F.L.W. were apparent in such things as exposed beams in the ceiling, nice wood touches and an unusual room shape. All the rooms face an interior courtyard which is very spacious and has an out door pool; this being winter, the courtyard was a nice snowscape scene. The reasonable room rates, the nice room size, the pool, the location of some eateries down the road and in the motel all make this a nice place for a small summer relaxacon, called of course, what else but SnowCon? Cook Nuclear Center might even provide an interesting experience for the adventurous souls. Any takers of this silly idea?

Aside from these diversions and entertainments of the holiday season, it is now winter in Chicago, and COLD! I am into my winter habits of continually wearing long thermal underwear, and using 2+ quilts when I sleep at night. The temperature seems incapable of rising above 20° F. and I think fond thoughts of visiting fen in Florida. Hope those of you on the East and West coasts are having an easier time of it. Keith, if I hear one more time how bored you are getting of blue skies, I shall send you a cold front, UPS! Don't let your blood get too acclimated to the California blues skies and hot tubs though, as you are destined to emigrate from the west, eventually, you know! Just as Jeff is due to return someday too! (Hm, that gives me an idea for a G<sub>T</sub> filk of that song about "someday we'll be together..")

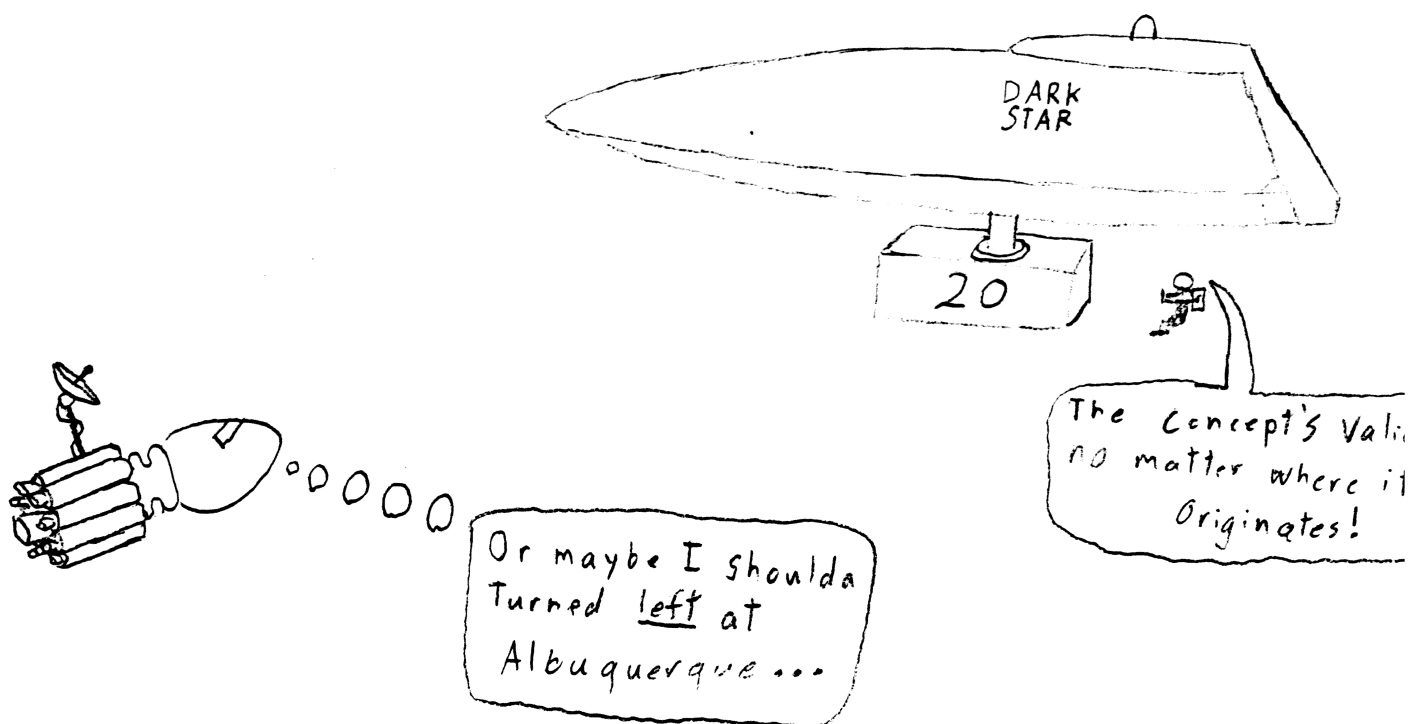
\*\*\*\*\*

All Right Now, No Mumbles About Second Childhoods!!

\*\*\*\*\*

While shopping for Christmas presents this year, I serendipitously obtained a #110 Lego set for Dick. Well guess who played with 'em more than him? Not that he didn't try to get them back, but I was having FUN! Since then we have added a #112 set (more bricks, hinges, and other neat stuff), A Mobile Lab and a Patrol Craft to our collection. Gosh wow, but those things are NEAT! I hadn't owned a set as a child, and so was a total neo at putting the things together, but gads was it easy and I didn't even need to read the directions! As Tinker Toys have never thrilled me, perhaps they are too much of a challenge to a non-mechanical type, I was amazed at my instant affinity to Legos. Anyway, there is now a fully assembled Mobile Lab sitting on the shelf next to the rest of the kits, and anytime you would like to see a couple of happy kids, stop on by and watch us play with our Lego sets! Are there anymore closet Lego freaks out there? (I promise I won't laugh!)

More in April, hopefully of birds, flowers and spring rather than of snow and quilts!



Next time, better look it up in your

## WU & FABRICANT

Well, better late (even if by five months) than never, I always say. Let's see. Now, where shall I start... (hmmmmmmmm... I know!)

### Personal Update

Well, that was easy enough. I was afraid I'd lost my touch. Oh. Oh, yes.

Since last I wrote, I have finished my employment with the National Association of Independent Insurers, and started and finished another semester at Harper Junior College. (With one of the highest semester's GPA of my entire college career, no less than a 3.5 on a scale of 4.)

And I've also celebrated Fibnnaci day. If you take the first six terms of the Fibonnaci sequence (Discounting term zero, the 0) and divide them up into a date you get: 11/23/58. Which by some strange coincidence happens to be my date of birth. (Actually, it's not as great a coincidence as it could be. It would be better if it was the date of birth of some great mathematician, but as far as I know none has appeared with that birth date yet.)

### Adrift in Carl Sagan's Cosmos-

Well, the much touted series, Cosmos, has come and gone during my absence from these pages. While I myself was unable to catch more than half the shows due to scheduling conflicts, from what others have said, I gather what I caught was representative.

The first show was entirely too full of poetic generalities and sense-of-wonder for my taste, though the explanation of how the earth was first shown to be round was extremely well done and showed promise of what the show could do when Carl settled down. Which he did, for the most part. Some of the later shows went a bit overboard on the wondrous beauty of the universe bit, but on the whole it was a good series.

This  
is  
a  
five  
page  
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book.

#### Cosmos (cont.) -

One of the reasons that I conclude that the series was a success in what it attempted to do is my mother.

Neither of my parents are what you could call readers, which I suppose makes it all the more unusual I turned out the way I have. One of the most common things I hear from my mother is whyaren't I doing something else instead of reading. She thinks Science Fiction is trash, and that in general I read too much.

I offer this only for background. One night at dinner, my mother (whose schedule did not preclude watching Cosmos) started a discussion of Kepler's Third Law with me. Just out of the blue. It turned out that this was one of the things that Carl had covered that week.

So anytime, while watching the show in re-run that you start to take anger at Mr. Sagan's aproach, just remember that we are not his intended audience. For the most part, we are aware of the things he is striving to get across. But there is a huge mass of people out there who are not and have to be coddled and cajoled to keep them interested while picking all this up.

(I'm just wondering what Carl will do when they offer him a guest spot on the Muppet show...)

Oh, and incidently, for those of you far richer than I, a mildly reliable source has informed me that the series will be available on magnavox format video disk sometime late in 1981.

#### Random Notes-

I have found what is (so far, at least) the ultimate jelly bean in terms of fidelity to the original flavor. It is tangerine, and I'll probably have some at the next several conventions I attend.

I recently ran across a book titled Alien (not the novelization) whose cover blurb called it the most terrifying book since Close Encounters of the Third Kind. Now what could that possibly mean?

A recent news release states that the BBC has signed a contract with some east coast cable tv network, and that evidently very little british material will be seen on Public Television anymore. Some of the stuff that will be lost we can bid "Good Riddance!" to, but a lot of the material that makes public tv viable in America is import. Some of the episodes of Nova, for example, start life on a BBC science show called Horizon.

This space was originally reserved for a report on an article from the October ninth, 1980 edition of Electronics magazine, on the possible discovery of a room temperature superconductor by a metalurgist at Wright Patterson Air Force Base. However, it seems that Bob Trembley plans on including a Xerox of the article in his 'zine.

The oddest thing happened just before the Voyager-Saturn encounter. I was trying to find out whether the local PBS outlet was planning any coverage (They didn't have any, but that's another story) and so I called the Jet Propulsion Lab in Pasadena to ask them, but evidently they got confused and thought I'd said I was connected with PBS, because they started reeling off Satcom transponder numbers and times like they thought I had the ability to pick up satellite broadcasts. While it's t-o late to catch the first Saturn encounter, there's still another next August, so if you know anyone who can pick these things up, it wouldn't hurt to tell them that the information is relatively easy to come by...

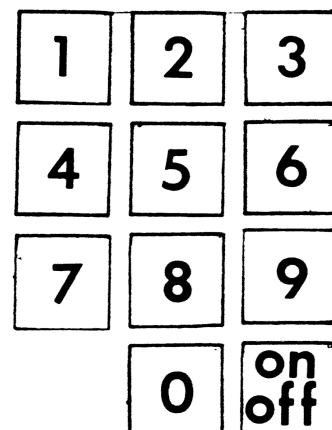
No, my local PBS station didn't carry the Saturn pictures, just like they didn't cover Jupiter. In fact, the best coverage we in Chicago got of Saturn was on ABC Nightline. What is this? Anyone would think pictures of the outer planets were obscene or something...

What you see before you is the end of civilization as we know it. A perfectly portable doomsday device in the form of a television set. 8½ inches by 11, and about an inch or so thick, battery operated. It will be possible to take it almost anywhere you could possibly receive a signal. On a bus, to the office, to a restaurant, anywhere. People will no longer have to miss a show because they aren't near a tv set. And so all work will grind to a halt, and everyone's brain will turn to granola.

OK, OK. So it's not quite that bad. Still, this thing (which I estimate should be feasible by 1990) could have interesting sociological impact. Because it is portable, it really can't be hooked into any of the more directly responsive forms of television that have recently surfaced (Cable, specifically, as it may be possible to build a television game or microcomputer into a unit this size by the time it becomes practical) and so once again the consumer would be at the mercy of the networks who have recently demonstrated by the high failure rate of new series that they do not know what the public wants, or are at least unwilling to supply it.

Which means that a television set like this would potentially be the last remaining purpose for network television. Recent advances such as Cable, video recorders, videodisks, tv games and home computers are providing (at least for the rich) some very attractive alternatives for tv viewers, alternatives that are more responsive to their desires than network programming ever could be. Most of this has yet to make itself felt in the marketplace, but we may be on the verge of the point where the last true purpose of television networks is to provide live sports coverage and up to date news. (Though, again, these could be covered just as well by Cable.)

Yes, I know that the networks will maneuver the FCC into forcing their survival, but that is only a stop gap. Already, several networks are investigating acquiring their own cable setups, and certainly their production facilities would be in great demand. It's just that they will have to listen to the public for a change, as viewership will determine revenue more than ever.



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a three  
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Seeing as everything between two Fnords is invisible, if you slip up and only put one down on paper, does anyone looking at it go temporarily blind?

Incidentally, a news report I ran across a while ago in New Scientist magazine (the September 25th issue) mentioned a Sony video home movie system. It consisted of a camera about the size of a standard super-8 camera, weighing 2 kilograms with batteries, with a built in video recorder. It uses CCD imaging techniques, with tape roughly the size of a standard audio cassette, 25 meters worth, good for twenty minutes. (The camera could hold a cassette with twice that much tape, they say.)

It records in color, and the camera attaches to a playback unit which plays back the tape direct (with freeze frame, fast forward and search modes) or enables it to be re-recorded on a standard video recorder.

They say that this unit is four or five years away from the market, but that they are showing it now in hopes of avoiding another mess about standards like that currently causing problems in the video cassette and disk fields.

Well, enough of this. I'm going to go a little light on the mailing comments, as there is a lot of backlog, I'm a little out of practice and I'm facing yet another deadline. So rest assured that I read your 'zines, and it is the utter truth that I've never read a 'zine I didn't like.

#### Mailing Comments on Apa-Tech #8-

Lasergram-The russian system of postal coding could be viewed as having two flaws:

- 1) Most envelopes must have this fill-in-the-blank or connect-the-dot stylecoding space printed on them by all envelope manufacturers. (Also, I suspect that there would be some contrast problems with dark stationery envelopes. Try to restrict the color of some socialites party invitations, and I suspect you'll have a revolution on your hands.)
- 2) Either you must limit the envelopes size or make certain that the code blank is always a specified number of inches from the bottom. (Personally, I think a good idea would be to print it on oversized stamps. Then again, I tend to favor a strictly alphabetic zip code anyway. Easier to remember, even if it's only a random sequence.)

#### Lost in the Darkness-RAEBNC

Transporter Topics-Capricorn I, being held in the northern Chicago suburb of Evanston, is said to be having a film program of japanese animation. (In case you find yourself free about then, its being held February 20 thru the 22.)

Rolf-Sorry to hear about the thefts. Haven't had time to work on the sequences yet.

CRAY -RAEBNC

Unpaid Bills- RAEBNC

Licorice bazooka-But in figuring how many codes per square meter for NYC



Mailing Comments (cont.)-

Licorice Bazooka (cont.)- has a non-trivial vertical component due to high rises. So you really need to estimate the number of cubic meters in a major city, and assign them on that basis.

Electronic foods? I can see it now. "Johnny, you can't eat that now, we're almost ready for supper. Besides, its batteries haven't run down yet. You'll get a shock..."

To eliminate scanning flutter from television sets, on movie film I'd say all you'd have to do is take a long enough exposure that all frames contain a large number of scans, so as to emphasize the points from the display, and ignore the scan lines.

Jedi Mass Transit-RAEBNC

(Sorry, folks, but I just realized I'm not commenting on more zine than I am commenting on this time, so I'll have to drop the acknowledgements. Back to normal next time...)

Fanchild in the Promised Land-Think nothing of it, Keith, I just like hanging around airports. (That's not quite true, but I feel like I should see all my friends off at the airport if I possibly can. Especially when the trip is one-way. Oh, and congratulations on surviving six months in lotus land without being swallowed by the mass mind and vocabulary.)

Mailing Comments on Apa-Tech #9-

Lost in the Darkness- Thanks for the offer, but it looks like I may be able to stay with xerox afterall. It's so much more legible.

Horrid Quotidian Aque-That was a neat title trick Haskell pulled. Wish I'd thought of it.

Tookie Bird Say-(OOWK, OOWK, EEK, EEK, Tookie, Tookie. So there.)  
Actually in some ways, I liked Iguanacon better. I far prefer Boston (which is a lovely city) to Phoenix, the hotel in Phoenix was better able to cope with a Worldcon. It had much more space to congregate in and seemed to have a better elevator situation. (Of course, it has been a couple of years, and I might have forgotten something...)

Hertzian Oscillator-You criticism of the Pacer for wasted room is well founded. Not so much head room, though. What I have really found lacking is cargo space. Passenger space, it's fine on, but on the way to Louisville, with three passengers, I had to strap two suitcases to the roof rack to close the hatch.

In re your comment to Gretchen: "Flahing on jumbles"? Aha! A creeping Californianism at last. "Don't go near that coast, I said. It's worth your life, your liberty, your sacred honor, your vocabulary. I told URK!...

\*AHEM\* The preceding tirade does not necessarily reflect the views of The Imaginary Press, or its employees. Equal time will be given to all opposing viewpoints. Submit your views in writing to

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pages)                     Prospect Heights, Ill  
                               60070

Smith's Corona-Believe it or not, PAEBNC(for the moment, at least.

Coming Next Month-

A return to Normalcy!  
Perhaps some more consistency...  
More mailing comments, and more in them  
A chicken in every pot.

See you in February!

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Is Stardance Anaerobic Dancing? ... cont'd

screen. Consider Barbara Walters who lost her credibility when it was rumored she negotiated herself a \$1 million/year contract. (Why is a man considered "ambitious" and "successful" while a woman is a "bitch"?)

I think you've been listening to too many radical feminists, Birdsay. Part of what the pro-ERA people are doing is telling housewives that what they do is a viable, responsible job that is difficult and demanding. And that the ERA won't force them to leave their homes because their rewarding job is at home.

You called the woman who considered her clothing job more rewarding than raising her children "disturbed". Put that label not on the woman but on a society that gave her no egoboo for being a housewife but said she was "utterly worthless". How could a woman look at her life any other way when she was being bombarded with that?

I believe, in the end, that radical feminism has its uses as a spark plug for a group with the conviction and action of the League of Women Voters. But as the spark plug only ignites the main power so the radical feminists have their place and should be kept in the background. And that's enough for now.

RTO: See pg.7. Yes, you got yourself in trouble for that one. What's wrong with stability?

Bill-Aitch-Fyunch-Click: At this late hour I am of the opinion that techies should keep as low a profile as possible and try to be ignored.

Corona: I admit that my tirades in Apa-Tech sound like Jeff's editorials in Pyro. Only I state many times, directly and indirectly, that I don't always take my hellfire and brimstone seriously. Everyone knows that I'm the female version of Jeff or maybe the Jeff's the male version of me. // Lasers: I'm sick of hearing about lasers and our indecisiveness. Mary Lynn has the regulations now and so we'll talk about the subject more intelligently. As for me, I will now campaign vociferously that the only rational, acceptable thing to do is not fire our lasers at all in public. That excludes only our rooms and techie parties (and maybe techie panels.) Those people who fire their lasers in public will get a severe tongue-lashing from me on the first offense and if it happens again I may just go to the concom and tell them to forbid it. Lasers, whether they are or not, are perceived as dangerous and someday (if the concom doesn't shut us down first) someone is going to get hurt and as Tullio says hysterical blindness is just as bad as real blindness. Or someone will get mad or scared and call the police. We can't blithely play with our toys and wait for the disaster to befall us. We also can't expect the concom to stick out their necks and risk getting thrown out, losing their contract, or facing a lawsuit just to humor us. I believe the point of fandom is to have a good time and get egoboo. I think that lasers are a part of techie egoboo so I think that they should be allowed in conventions.